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# SOCRATES AND PLATO

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BY

G. C. FIELD, M.A., B.Sc.

*Lecturer in Ethics and Politics at the Victoria University, Manchester*

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# SOCRATES AND PLATO

A CRITICISM OF PROFESSOR A. E. TAYLOR'S  
'VARIA SOCRATICA'

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## SOCRATES AND PLATO.

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PROFESSOR A. E. Taylor, in his book, *Varia Socratica*, and Professor Burnet, in the introduction to his recent edition of the *Phaedo*, have challenged the traditional view of the character and teaching of Socrates and his relation to Plato. The view which they attack has been long held in England (though not abroad) almost without question. But the support of two such names must lend great weight to the opposite side, and makes it incumbent on those who still hold to the traditional view to produce strong arguments for their belief. The present paper is a modest attempt in this direction. It makes no claim to be based on original research or to put forward original opinions. The evidence which it contains is familiar to all who have studied the subject. But it has seemed worth while to collect it together in a compendious form, that its strength may be better realised. Nor is it claimed that all the evidence on the whole question has been examined. It is only the witnesses for the defence, the evidence on one side of the question that is here put forward. Whether it outweighs the testimony which the two skilled advocates on the other side have collected is a matter for the jury of those interested in the question. But the case at least ought not to be allowed to go by default.

What is the position taken up by the other side? They challenge the traditional view on several points, and perhaps their contentions may be fairly summarised thus: (1) 'That the portrait drawn in the Platonic dialogues of the personal and philosophical individuality of Socrates is in all its main points strictly historical.' (2) That, consequently, the views put in the mouth of Socrates by Plato

were really held by him. Particularly must we believe that he held the so-called Theory of Ideas, that he believed in the immortality of the soul on the grounds given in the *Phædo* and the *Republic*, and presumably that he adopted the daring political views of the latter dialogue. (3) That he was throughout his life profoundly interested in scientific and mathematical speculations. (4) That he was an Orphic and a Pythagorean, or at least deeply touched by their peculiar ideas. (5) That he was a member of an inner circle, a kind of secret society of Orphics and Pythagoreans, where the subjects that interested them were discussed, and where unauthorised religious observances took place. (6) That this was the real ground for the charge of impiety and introduction of novel deities on which he was condemned, a charge which strictly speaking was true and admitted of no answer. The evidence for these views is derived chiefly, of course, from Plato himself. But it is also based on Aristophanes' picture of Socrates in the *Clouds*, and is supported by many minor bits of evidence, particularly admissions extracted even from hostile witnesses like Xenophon. On the other hand, there is a great mass of evidence against all these views. And it is this that must now be produced.

The first point which we have to consider is the evidence of Xenophon on the question. Now for the evidence of Xenophon, such as it is, we must, it is necessary to insist, look almost entirely to the *Memorabilia*. And on this point at once we come into conflict with Professor Burnet. He writes: 'It [the traditional view] can only be made plausible, however, by isolating the *Memorabilia* from Xenophon's other writings in a way that seems wholly illegitimate. We must certainly take the *Oeconomicus* and the *Symposium* into account as well; and, in estimating Xenophon's claim to be regarded as a historian, we must never forget that he was the author of the *Cyropaedia*.' Whether Professor Burnet is going to deny the reliability of the account in the *Anabasis* or the *Hellenica*,



on the ground that Xenophon was the author of the *Cyropaedia*, I do not know. He will have to settle that with the historians. But I do not think that he would deny that, on the face of it, these two former works (the *Anabasis* and the *Hellenica*) stand on quite a different footing from the latter. No one reading them, if he knew the facts of Xenophon's life, could be in any doubt that, while two of them are intended to be taken as true history, the third is never meant to be taken as anything more than a historical novel with a moral purpose. Now the same difference seems to me, if I may chronicle a personal impression—argument on a point like this can consist in very little else—to appear almost equally obviously between the *Memorabilia* and the other Socratic works of Xenophon. I cannot conceive how anyone can read them through and still think that they are intended to be taken as on the same level in the matter of historical truth. The *Memorabilia* avows itself as an attempt to answer the accusers by a careful record of what sort of man Socrates really was. As such it would, of course, have no point at all, unless it were, as far as possible, historically true, or at least true enough to be believed by men who knew a good many of the facts. Important parts of it are not in dramatic form at all, but expressed rather in the tone of a sober record of historical fact. And he expressly avows that he is trying to give a true picture, as far as he knows and can remember, of the kind of man he was. This is a definite and explicit statement, not a cursory "Ἦκουσα δὲ πότε αὐτοῦ διαλεγόμενον like the opening of the *Oeconomicus*. We are not, of course, bound to maintain that all the dialogues and conversations recorded in the *Memorabilia* are literally word for word true to fact. Here the speeches in Thucydides are an excellent analogy. It is even possible that some of the occasions on which they are represented as taking place were not actual occurrences. The purpose of the book would be sufficiently fulfilled if they were true in substance, if they represented his actual opinions and methods as known

to Xenophon. If they do that it would be, according to Greek ideas, perfectly legitimate to express them in *oratio recta* rather than in *oratio obliqua*, and would not detract from the historical value of the work. But the case is quite different with the other Socratic works. I venture to believe that no one who read the *Oeconomicus*, for instance, would naturally take it as true, or as intended to be thought true. It is surely quite obviously meant as an ideal picture of the life of a country gentleman. It is thrown into dialogue form, but this really adds nothing to it, and it would be valueless as a picture of Socrates, who has no personality in the dialogue at all. In none of the other works do we find such weighty reasons for regarding them as intended to be true as we do in the *Memorabilia*. And the conclusion is therefore that it is quite legitimate to isolate the *Memorabilia* from the rest. It is the official Xenophontic account of the character of Socrates. Its aim and nature alike forbid us to look for any admitted fiction or misrepresentation in it. There are only three alternatives: either it is substantially true, or else Xenophon is deliberately lying, or else he is very ignorant.

The first alternative Professor Taylor and Professor Burnet cannot adopt. Partly by express statement, but far more by what he leaves out, Xenophon presents us with a picture of Socrates which it is impossible to reconcile with the one that these writers would have us accept. He denies that he was, at any rate in his later years, interested in mathematical and physical science except in its practical application. He denies that he introduced any new gods or unauthorised cults into the city. He is entirely silent about any organised body or 'inner circle' of Pythagoreans of which Socrates was a member, and the impression that his Socrates makes would render such membership extremely unlikely. And he says no word about any Theory of Ideas, though he professes to give the views of Socrates on many important questions. There are further striking differences from the portrait

that Plato gives us. There are no daring political speculations like the Communism of the *Republic*, though if Socrates had expressed such views it would be surely just the sort of thing to interest Xenophon. In fact, the Socrates of the *Memorabilia*, though a critic of democracy, is evidently far more comfortable in his surroundings in Athens than is the true philosopher in the *Republic* sheltering behind a wall from the storm of wind and rain. He is ready to urge some people to take part in public affairs: and he gives advice as to the best training for a statesman, such training certainly in no wise resembling the training in the *Republic*. He even goes so far as to deny the necessity of special training for a military leader, if only he has shown general ability. Altogether the differences are such that they cannot be explained away. It remains only to find some reason for rejecting the evidence of Xenophon.

We may, to begin with, reject it because we think that Xenophon had not got adequate sources of information, that he did not know the real facts. His chief source of information is, of course, his own memory. It is not contested that Xenophon knew Socrates: the question is only as to the extent of his acquaintance with him. Professor Burnet argues thus:—Xenophon, he says, left Athens on his Persian expedition at the beginning of 401, over two years before the death of Socrates. But he was not old at that time: he tells us in the *Anabasis* that he hesitated to take command on account of his youth. But Proxenus, his Boeotian friend, who was one of the leaders, was only thirty. Therefore Xenophon must have been appreciably younger, say twenty-five. But Proxenus had written to invite him to join him: that is, he knew of him as a likely man to go on such an expedition. And this seems to prove that he had already seen a good deal of service. And as most of the military service at the time was away from Athens, he must have been pretty continuously absent from the time he came of military age. So that his intercourse with Socrates can only have

been very intermittent at the best. So Professor Burnet argues. But it does not need to be pointed out how very speculative and full of assumptions such an argument is. Every step in it admits of an alternative explanation. His hesitation to take command may show, not that he was younger, but that he was more modest than Proxenus, or that he may have felt his youth more through comparative lack of experience, or that he may have realised that the difficulties of the situation being now much greater, there was an especial need of a man of age and experience. At most we can say that he was younger than Proxenus: but it may have been a question only of two or three years. Then the invitation from Proxenus does not really prove that he had seen much service. It only proves that Proxenus knew him as the sort of person who might want to come: and he might well be that without ever having actually been on an expedition at a distance from Athens. If he had been once or twice, that still would have left him a good deal of time at Athens. Altogether on such flimsy foundations it seems impossible to build up much of a case against Xenophon. And we must remember, too, that his acquaintance with Socrates may well have begun some time before he was of military age. Socrates, as Professor Burnet says, was a familiar figure to the boys of Athens.

There seems, then, no adequate reason to doubt that Xenophon had had plenty of opportunity of intercourse with Socrates. He was evidently on intimate enough terms to ask his advice about going on the expedition, and he must have heard a good deal for himself of Socrates' opinions and mode of life. But besides that, he would also have heard a good deal about him from other persons who were, perhaps, more intimate. As an admirer and friend of Socrates he must have come a great deal in contact with his other friends, and from them he could have picked up plenty of information as to their impression of Socrates, and the things which



he had said and done at times when Xenophon himself was absent. He no doubt also acquired information after his return from those who had known Socrates while he yet lived. He was evidently acquainted with the many writings about Socrates which appeared, and he probably owed a lot to information given to him personally, or picked up in conversation. He is supposed to have derived a great deal of his material from Antisthenes, and he quotes Hermogenes as having told him what Socrates said after the accusation was brought, when Xenophon, of course, was absent from Athens. We do not know where he may have met Hermogenes after his return to Greece. But there is no reason to doubt that the information was derived from him. It would be singularly pointless as an invention.

With those sources at his command he must have known a good deal about Socrates, and it is not likely that he would omit any really important fact (except on one supposition which will be examined directly). Thus he evidently has fairly accurate information of the accusations that were brought against Socrates, whether at his trial or by his enemies afterwards. He gives many of their arguments beyond those which could be derived from a study of the indictment, and is at some pains to refute them. If the real crux of the accusation had been the charge of introducing unauthorised cults and being a member of a secret religious society, he must have known of it. But he says nothing about it, and one would gather from reading his first chapters that he was at a loss to know how the accusation of bringing in strange gods could be justified. He gives the impression that the accusers said little about this, and relied mainly on the charge of corrupting the youth. He must also have known if Socrates had been a leading member of a regular Pythagorean circle. Such an important fact about him could hardly have escaped his notice, and yet he says nothing about it.

Finally, if the Theory of Ideas was as important for the

real Socrates as it is for Plato's representation of him, it would be at least excessively improbable that Xenophon had not heard of it. Plato certainly does not represent Socrates as keeping his views on this subject for the ears of an inner Pythagorean circle. We have, of course, to recollect the fact that Xenophon was not himself a philosopher, and was not of a particularly profound turn of mind, though he can have been by no means a fool. We should not, therefore, expect a very accurate or intelligent account of it from him, but no mention of it at all would indeed be strange, especially as he tells us a good deal about Socrates' opinions generally. There is a further point. Both Professor Taylor and Professor Burnet find traces in the *Memorabilia* of material borrowed from Plato. Whether their arguments are very convincing is another matter. But it is quite probable that Xenophon had access to the Platonic dialogues, and if that is so he must have known about the Theory of Ideas and indeed about the whole Platonic picture of Socrates. Why, then, does he not put it in? This action is capable at least of intelligible explanation if we assume that he rejected it because he did not believe it to be true of the actual Socrates. And if we assume that he knew that the Platonic dialogues did not even claim to give a historical picture of the actual Socrates, the whole thing becomes even more natural and intelligible. At any rate it is clear that if he had access to these dialogues he must have known that they represented Socrates as holding these beliefs.

It does not seem, then, that we can explain the silence of Xenophon on these points as due to ignorance. There only remains the other hypothesis, that it is due to deliberate misrepresentation and suppression on his part. This is the position Professor Taylor takes up. He argues that Xenophon was trying to defend the memory of his friend from the accusations that had been brought against him. It was part of his purpose, therefore, to represent him, in Professor Taylor's words, 'as having no

dangerous originality.' He could not deny his connection with Orphic and Pythagorean cults. He therefore carefully suppresses all mention of his connection with these. The Theory of Ideas has to go too, for that had the trail of Pythagoreanism over it, and its mention might arouse suspicion. Now this argument really ascribes to Xenophon a degree of stupidity that amounts almost to insanity. We must remember that to make Professor Taylor's view plausible we have to assume that Socrates' connection with the Pythagorean body was a matter of common knowledge. By the time Xenophon wrote it had already been shown by Plato (on their interpretation of him). At the time of the trial it had been put in the forefront of the accusation against him. This argues a considerable degree of common knowledge of it, and those who did not know it before would have heard of it at the trial. But, most remarkable of all, it was, according to Professor Taylor's view, so open and notorious that years before it had been introduced into a comedy and recognised as a true feature of Socrates: this is how Professor Taylor interprets the *Clouds*. And yet in spite of all that Xenophon could imagine that he could effectively defend the memory of Socrates by simply omitting to state what everyone knew to be the case, and by passing over in silence the chief charge against him. Can anyone really believe it? If his readers were going to be so easily taken in as that, it would have been simpler for Xenophon explicitly to deny the charge altogether, and much more effective. If the facts were too well known to everybody for this, then it would have been absolutely necessary to take some notice of them, to try to minimise their importance or explain them away. But no one in his senses would dream of attempting a defence by simply omitting to mention the chief charge, especially when it was based upon facts which had for long been well known to all Athens. The whole idea is too wildly improbable. Whether Xenophon left out essential facts or not, it cannot have been done from this motive.

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There are other interesting points about the accusation and trial of Socrates. Xenophon's account is, of course, strikingly corroborated, as we shall see in more detail later, by the *Apology*, though this hardly seems sufficient grounds for arguing that he obtained his information solely from that work. And if the historical character of the *Apology* is accepted, we have to swallow the additional difficulty of supposing that Socrates himself thought that he could make a defence by keeping silence about an important part of the charge. If the accusations of impiety had been based on the perfectly familiar fact that Socrates was a member of a secret religious society, it is surely impossible that either he or Xenophon could even have pretended to think that it was based on the fact of his divine sign. If we study the only direct evidence we have, we get the impression that the prosecution did not lay much stress on the charge of impiety, but depended chiefly on their other line of attack. That is to say, the accusation was a manifesto not of religious, but of moral and political orthodoxy. Socrates was condemned because he was held responsible for the spirit of criticism which, as the good democrats thought, had begun to undermine the foundations of morality and patriotism, and had found their embodiment in the pupils and friends of Socrates, Alcibiades and Critias. Surely in the circumstances of the time this is ample explanation of his condemnation. It is not rendered more intelligible by the addition of the suspicion of Orphic or Pythagorean practices. Most of the instances of religious bigotry at Athens, from Anaxagoras down to the Mutilation of the Hermae, seem to have had a political motive at the back of them; and we really want more proof than the extraordinarily flimsy evidence that Professor Taylor brings for the assumption that connection with a Pythagorean body at that time would have aroused such suspicion and dislike in Athens. Why, for instance, are there no other instances of prosecutions on such grounds? Another small point on this subject may be mentioned, as it pro-



vides an excellent illustration of Professor Taylor's controversial methods. He quotes the dying speech of Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia*, with its expressions of the hope of immortality and attempts to justify that hope by argument. It is not perfectly clear what exactly he considers to be proved by the citation of this passage. But he seems to suggest that it shows that Xenophon really knew that Socrates held such beliefs, and that he accepted the *Phaedo* as a true expression of his master's views. All it really proves, of course, is that Xenophon had learnt somewhere of this doctrine. He may very well have taken it from the *Phaedo*, without in any way committing himself to the assertion that the views of that dialogue were attributable to the historical Socrates. But it suggests a further point. Xenophon was not a Pythagorean mystic or a philosopher, and he did not write for such. He was an ordinary country gentleman of cultivated taste, on the whole very well contented with the world as he found it, and on the whole in full sympathy with the mental outlook of his ordinary contemporaries, not strikingly original or particularly open to new ideas. If such a man as this accepted and advocated the doctrine of immortality, it strongly suggests (though, of course, it does not prove) that such a doctrine would by no means appear so shocking and heretical to the average Athenian as Professor Taylor would have us believe. Nor for the matter of that does Plato represent it as such. Socrates puts forward the possibility of it to the judges as a view which would be familiar to them, and by no means repellent to their ideas.

A word now as to the so-called admissions of Xenophon, which Professor Taylor seems to think of some importance. What are the passages in question? The first passage is *Memorabilia*, I, ii, 8, where Xenophon is trying to acquit Socrates of the responsibility for the subsequent developments of his friends, Critias and Alcibiades. He argues that they only associated with him for the sake of what they could get out of him in further-

ance of their political ambitions, and ceased to care for his company when they had got all they could. And he contrasts them with the real friends of Socrates like 'Chacrephon, Chaecrates, Hermocrates, Simmias, Cebes and Phaedondes, who . . . associated with him not that they might become popular orators or forensic pleaders, but that they might become good men and benefit house and household, relations and friends, city and citizens.' This passage Professor Taylor finds very suspicious. It actually admits that some of Socrates' friends were more intimate than others, which, of course, must mean that he was the member of a Pythagorean brotherhood; and it does not append a note to each name to say to which city it was that the person in question was attached. This is clear evidence of Xenophon's dishonesty. He is evidently trying 'to conceal the fact that three of the persons named are foreigners.' All this really rather recalls the forensic methods of Serjeant Buzfuz. But ultimately one can only leave it to each man's own judgment whether he really thinks that the passage reads so suspiciously. Suppose anyone were to write, 'Chatham, Pitt, Palmerston, Washington, Lincoln were all men pre-eminently distinguished by love of their country,' would he expect to be charged with choosing his language so as to make the passage read as if all the people mentioned belonged to the same country, and to conceal the fact that the last two were Americans? There is another passage where, as Professor Taylor puts it, 'the fact is let out' that Cebes and Simmias came from Thebes. That is in the account of Socrates' visit to Theodota, where Socrates expressly states it. Again, everyone must decide for himself whether he thinks it likely that Xenophon would have inserted this passage if he had really desired to conceal the fact. To me, it seems only another instance of the dependence of the whole theory on the hypothesis of the insanity, or at least of the 'mental deficiency' of Xenophon.

The other passages which are of any importance refer

to Socrates' knowledge of mathematics and physical science. They occur in *Memorabilia*, IV, vii, where Xenophon represents Socrates as advising people not to study geometry or astronomy further than would be of practical use to them, though he was himself by no means ignorant of them, having studied them in their higher theoretical developments. It is difficult to find any traces of reluctant admission on these points in the passage mentioned. It reads rather as if Xenophon were anxious to assert these facts, so as to give more weight to Socrates' practical advice by showing that it came from a man who really knew. But this point is really of very secondary importance. No one is concerned to prove that Socrates was entirely ignorant of these subjects, nor that he had never been interested in them. All that the view here advocated need maintain is that his centre of interest, at any rate during the greater period of his life, lay in ethical and political questions, and that his real contributions to thought came from his interest in these subjects.

This concludes the examination of Xenophon. No one need maintain that Xenophon is infallible, or that he gives a portrait of Socrates complete and exact at every point. No doubt there must have been points on which he was ignorant or misinformed. On other points he may have failed to understand, and have given in consequence a garbled account. And there must also have been things which did not interest him, and which were therefore omitted: we may have lost much in this way through the limitations of his interests. But on the particular points with which we are concerned, or on some of them at any rate, the facts seem to be such that, if they were facts at all, he must have known them, he must have realised their importance, and he cannot have hoped to conceal them: so that we may claim that his silence on these points is weighty evidence against the views of Professor Burnet and Professor Taylor, evidence which cannot really be dismissed as they have dismissed it.

A piece of evidence which would be invaluable on this subject is lost to us by the total disappearance of the writings of the other disciples and friends of Socrates; but though the direct evidence of these men is not available, yet what we know of them raises a question of general probability, which is worth mentioning. We know, of course, that the circle of disciples and associates of Socrates included many, besides Plato, who became later distinguished as philosophers. Most prominent, perhaps, is the figure of Antisthenes; but besides him there is Aristippus, who is said to have founded the Cyrenaic school, Euclides of Megara, and Phaedo, the eponymous hero of the dialogue, who founded a school at Elis. About the opinions of the last we know hardly anything, but of the others we know at least enough to show that they differed from each other in their opinions, in some cases very widely. Now there seems to be no other case where those who were known as the disciples of one philosopher differed so widely among themselves. The successors often modified or extended the teaching of the founder of the school. But there seems to be no case where several of the immediate followers each founded a different school, differing strongly among themselves, yet all claiming to be disciples of the same master. If Socrates really taught a definite body of views, like that known as the Theory of Ideas, for instance, this is very strange. But it becomes altogether intelligible if we regard Socrates not as the teacher of a definite doctrine, but as a stimulating force which aroused interest and promoted discussion without putting forward a body of definite views.

We now turn to the evidence of the writers later than the immediate disciples and associates of Socrates. And our first witness, in fact the only one of any real importance, is Aristotle. Professor Taylor's treatment of the evidence of Aristotle will seem to many the most unsatisfactory chapter in the book. On one point, indeed, it must be admitted that he has proved his case. The



fancied distinction in Aristotle's usage between *Σωκράτης* and *ὁ Σωκράτης* he has definitely shown to be merely imaginary: one almost feels surprised after reading his convincing evidence that anyone could ever have accepted Fitzgerald's canon. That point, for what it is worth, must be conceded; but beyond this there is hardly anything in his treatment of the subject which will command general agreement. His main position is that Aristotle is not an independent witness at all for Socrates' opinions, since practically all his information on the subject is derived from Plato, a statement which he proves, after having advanced some general considerations, by showing that all the statements of importance in Aristotle about Socrates and his opinions can be paralleled from the Platonic dialogues. We must, therefore, believe that Aristotle simply assumed throughout that the Platonic Socrates was the real, historical Socrates.

On this position there are three general points to be raised. In the first place it seems an entirely unwarranted assumption that information derived from Plato is the same thing as information derived from the Platonic dialogues. Yet Professor Burnet, at any rate, makes this assumption. He writes, 'It is to be supposed that Plato and his friends would represent Socrates much as he appears in the dialogues.' But, on the traditional view, this is just what we cannot suppose, for if the dialogues, or some of them, were avowedly intended to put forward Plato's own views, and not the opinions of Socrates at all, he could have no motive for concealing this fact from his pupils, and must almost certainly have given them the key for distinguishing the historical Socrates from the dramatic character in the dialogues. Secondly, the fact that all Aristotle's statements about Socrates can be paralleled from some dialogue of Plato's really proves very much less than Professor Taylor supposes, for it is necessary to show not merely that Aristotle sometimes recognised Plato's picture of Socrates as correct, but that he always did so, that he throughout

identifies the Platonic and the real Socrates. If, as is probably the case, the dialogues vary very much in their value as historical accounts of Socrates, if, for instance, the earliest dialogues are in methods and opinions simply Socratic while the later ones are pure Plato, most at any rate of the parallels quoted may be explained in a way entirely consistent with the traditional view. Finally, even on that view it need occasion no surprise that Aristotle sometimes refers to Socrates opinions which are put into his mouth in the dialogues. It is, indeed, quite natural to quote the remarks of a character in a dramatic composition by name, even though it is known that the opinions expressed are those of the author. To give Professor Taylor's own instance, there would be nothing strange in referring to Wolsey's advice to avoid ambition, even though there was excellent reason for believing that Wolsey never made such a remark, and that the sentiment is entirely Shakespeare's. On the other hand, supposing that the dialogues are thoroughly historical in intention, that they are meant as records of Socrates' actual opinions, we should expect that opinions from them would always be quoted as his, and not as Plato's. The fact, to which Professor Burnet refers, that Aristotle 'sometimes refers to the Platonic Socrates as Plato' becomes then, to say the least of it, rather strange. Supposing that all our information about Plato were derived from Professor Taylor's writings on the subject, we should surely never think of quoting his opinions with the preface, 'As Professor Taylor says,' or talking of 'Professor Taylor's Theory of Ideas,' even if we thought that Professor Taylor agreed with the views in question.

There are cases, however, where such considerations would not apply. When Aristotle is not quoting particular opinions, but is trying to give a general account of the whole point of view of Socrates, or explaining what his position and his particular work in the history of philosophy was, or speaking about his relations to other

philosophers, we should expect more strictness in the use of names. It is to passages like these, particularly those which occur in the historical sketch in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, that we must look for the really important evidence. If passages like these give us any statement about Socrates which is incompatible with anything of importance put into his mouth in any of the Platonic dialogues, then we shall have all the evidence that we can expect for the view that Aristotle does not simply identify the Platonic and the historical Socrates, and that he recognises that some at least of the opinions attributed by Plato to Socrates were not those which he really held.

The first piece of evidence from Aristotle is negative. If Socrates held anything like the Theory of Ideas, and if Plato learnt it from him, we should expect at least some mention of the fact, but there is none; we do not even get any of the statements on the subject which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates in the dialogues quoted as his. Whether Aristotle says anything positively incompatible with the view that Socrates held this doctrine is another matter, but it is at least noteworthy that there is no passage which can be quoted as positive evidence for the view. And there is a further point: Aristotle is generally careful to give some account of the relations of the different schools of philosophy to one another. If, therefore, Socrates was a Pythagorean, or deeply influenced by them, we should certainly expect to hear of it. But Aristotle gives no hint that he knows of any such connection. Professor Taylor comments on the strangeness of the fact that there is no account in the *Metaphysics* of Socrates' relations to his predecessors, or of the influence they exerted on him. It is indeed strange, and if Plato knew that Socrates drew his main ideas from the Pythagoreans, and if Aristotle obtained his knowledge of Socrates from Plato, it becomes so strange that it really admits of no explanation at all. On the other hand, Aristotle lays emphasis on the close connection of Plato with the Pythagoreans. Only he leaves the distinct im-

pression that their influence on him was entirely independent of his connection with Socrates.

We now come to those passages in which there is definite mention of Socrates' beliefs. It is not necessary to go into all the passages that Professor Taylor quotes. Those relevant to our purpose are few.

There are three important passages in the *Metaphysics* which must be considered first:

(1) *Metaphysics*, A. 987, b. 1-4. Mr. Ross translates, 'Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and *neglecting the world of nature as a whole*, but seeking the universal in these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions.' The words italicised are the important ones for our purpose. No doubt, as Professor Taylor says, anyone could learn from some of the Platonic dialogues that Socrates was interested in finding universal definitions of ethical terms. That, however, is beside the point. But could anyone who accepted the whole of the Platonic picture of Socrates as historical, possibly say that Socrates did not concern himself at all *περὶ τῆς ὅλης φύσεως*? Professor Taylor takes no notice of this very significant statement, yet it is absolutely incompatible with his view of Socrates.

The passage which immediately follows is even more significant. 'Plato accepted his teaching, but held that the problem applied not to any sensible thing, but to entities of another kind—for this reason, that the common definition could not be a definition of any sensible thing, as they were always changing. Things of this other sort, then, he called Ideas, and sensible things, he said, were apart from these, and were all called after them.' Here Aristotle describes Plato's belief in a way which strongly recalls the views put into the mouth of Socrates in the dialogues. But, more important than this, he contrasts him with Socrates, and in the course of working out this contrast ascribes to him the belief in the Theory of Ideas. This suggests as strongly as anything short of explicit



assertion can, that Socrates did not hold any such beliefs, or apply the term 'Ideas' to anything.

(2) *Metaphysics*, M. 1078, b. 28. After saying that Socrates interested himself in questions of moral virtue and sought for universal definitions there, Aristotle goes on, 'For there are two things which one would justly ascribe to Socrates, inductive arguments and universal definition; for both these things are concerned with the starting-point of science. Socrates, however, did not make his universals or his definitions separate things: but they [*οἱ δὲ*: Mr. Ross translates 'his successors'] separated them and called such kind of things Ideas.' The *οἱ δὲ*, as Professor Taylor recognises, must refer to *οἱ πρῶτοι τὰς ἰδέας φήσαντες εἶναι* mentioned a few lines above. This important passage will have to be treated much more briefly than it deserves. To go fully into all Professor Taylor's arguments on the subject would need an essay by itself.

We here get, be it first noted, a clear distinction between Socrates, and 'the people who first said there were Ideas.' Now as the Platonic Socrates most certainly says that there are Ideas, the emphasis in this distinction must lie, for Professor Taylor, in *πρῶτοι*. Socrates comes after the people who *first* said there were Ideas, and, while still saying there were Ideas, effected an improvement in the theory by not separating the Ideas from the particulars. This is obviously a very strained and unnatural way of taking the passage, which reads most naturally as if Socrates stood outside the development of the Theory of Ideas altogether. (Note that Socrates is said not to have separated his definitions, not his Ideas, from the particulars.) And if it is taken in that way the historical Socrates becomes sharply distinguished from the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues. But, further, on the other interpretation of it, Socrates must be taken as having effected an important improvement in the theory as compared with those who first advanced it, by not separating

the Ideas from the particulars. He thus makes a contribution of great value to the development of the theory. But his contribution is expressly stated to consist in 'inductive arguments and universal definitions,' and it is clearly implied that that is the full extent of it. The words, 'but he did not make his universals or definitions separate things,' simply state what he did not do: they cannot be read as asserting that he corrected the mistakes of his predecessors by re-uniting the universals and the particulars which they separated. There is surely a very natural way of understanding these words in full accordance with the traditional view of Socrates. His real service to thought lay in his bringing home to people the fact that logical definition was the essential thing for right understanding of anything, particularly of moral ideas, but he did not raise the question at all of what sort of thing the universal fact which had been defined was, whether it had an existence in its own right or not. He was not, therefore, led to make that divorce between the universals and the particulars which was so fatal to the theories of his successors. The question of the substantial existence of the universal, and then the question of its true relation to the particular were problems which greatly concerned Plato and the Platonic Socrates. But they had not been raised by the historical Socrates, whose work was done at a stage prior to that.

What, exactly, is meant here by *χωρισμός* is a question into which it is impossible to go now. To make Professor Taylor's view completely convincing it would be necessary to argue that the Platonic Socrates could not possibly be described as having 'separated' the Ideas from the particulars, and one may venture to think that that would be a difficult position to maintain.

(3) There is a third passage in the *Metaphysics* which Professor Taylor does not quote. It repeats a good deal of what has already been said, but throws a little fresh light on one or two difficult points. The reference is to *Metaphysics*, 1086, b. 2. Aristotle is considering 'the

way of thinking and the difficulties' of 'those who say that there are Ideas.' Their fault lay in trying to treat the Ideas at the same time as universals, and as separable, individual things, a mistake into which they were led by their anxiety to insist on the essential difference of the Ideas from sensible things. 'They thought that the particular things in the world of sense were in flux and that nothing in them stayed the same, but that the universal was something beyond them and other than them. It was Socrates, as said above, who gave the impulse to this theory through his definitions, but he did not separate them from the particulars: and he thought rightly in not separating them.'

He is evidently back here at the same question as in the last quotation. The further points that this passage suggests may be briefly noted. (i) The account of what was due to the influence of Socrates is thoroughly in accordance with the traditional view. (ii) The people whom he criticises, and with whom he contrasts Socrates are described here as 'those who say that there are Ideas.' If this description is meant to exclude the Socrates of the later Platonic dialogues, from the *Phaedo* onwards, it is surely rather a strange way of talking. (iii) The separating the Ideas from the sensible particulars is here further described as saying that the universal is *παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἕτερον τι*, a description which would surely apply quite naturally to the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues.

Altogether it appears that the *Metaphysics* affords no proof that the historical Socrates was affected by Pythagoreanism or believed in the Theory of Ideas, and indeed that the natural reading of the relevant passages distinctly suggests the contrary.

The other point on which Aristotle provides interesting evidence is concerned with the ethical doctrines of Socrates and Plato, particularly their moral psychology. Professor Taylor quotes several passages which need not be given verbatim. They are all in the same sense, and

give us a fairly definite statement of what Aristotle thought that Socrates believed on certain points. He is represented as identifying virtue and knowledge: virtue is *φρόνησις*; the several virtues are *ἐπιστήμαι*, sciences or branches of knowledge. There is therefore no vice except error. It is impossible to do evil if we know what is good. There is no such thing as *ἀκρασία*. Now, no doubt these statements may be paralleled from the earlier dialogues of Plato, particularly the *Protagoras*. But that is not the point. The question is, can they be made consistent with the opinions put into the mouth of Socrates in the later dialogues, like the *Meno*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Republic*? Could one, for instance, say of the Socrates of the *Meno* that he made virtue knowledge, in face of the express denial there that virtue is knowledge, and the important distinction between knowledge and right opinion? Or could anyone say that the Socrates of the *Phaedrus* or the *Republic* denied the possibility of *ἀκρασία*? It would be very difficult to interpret such statements so as to make them consistent with those dialogues. But the difficulty becomes a practical impossibility when we examine the explicit statement contained in a later work of the Aristotelian school, which shows us more definitely the true interpretation of these passages.

In the *Magna Moralia* (I. i. 5-7), in the brief historical sketch at the beginning, we get a definite distinction made between Socrates and Plato. Socrates went wrong in ethics, we are told, because 'he made the virtues sciences (*ἐπιστήμαι*).' This is impossible, we are told, because it would involve putting all virtue in the reasonable part of the soul. (For instance, there could be no courage or temperance, as these virtues are described in the *Republic*). And the writer goes on, 'The result is, then, that by making the virtues sciences he does away with the unreasoning part of the soul, and by doing this, he does away with feeling and moral disposition (*πάθος καὶ ἡθος*).' Surely no writer would speak thus of the Socrates

of the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*. And as this is definitely meant as a historical account, we can only conclude that he did not believe the picture of Socrates' ethical views in those dialogues to be historical. But there is more to come. He goes on to describe the contribution of Plato, as contrasted with Socrates. 'But after this Plato divided the soul correctly into the reasoning and the unreasoning elements, and assigned the appropriate virtues of each. So far he did well, but in what came after he was no longer correct, for he confused virtue with the investigation of the Good, and this was not correct, for they are not connected. For in telling about truth and what is (*ὑπὲρ τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἀληθείας*), it is not necessary to say anything about virtue: for the two have nothing in common.' The critical part clearly refers to the position assigned to the Idea of the Good in the *Republic*, and it obviously implies that that doctrine is not Socratic. The former part is, no doubt, a rough account of the tripartite division of the soul in the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic* by one who felt that the really important distinction was that between the rational and the other elements, the charioteer and the two horses. And again the implication is that Socrates did not recognise any division of the soul into parts. If this passage means anything, it means that Aristotle and those who learnt from him regarded the Socrates of some of the early dialogues as Socrates, and the Socrates of the later dialogues as Plato.

That is indeed the conclusion to be drawn from all the passages which Professor Taylor cites. All those of importance, where definite opinions are ascribed to Socrates, are paralleled from the early dialogues of Plato. In none of them are opinions put into Socrates' mouth which are only to be found in the later dialogues. There is one clear reference to the *Phaedrus* (Professor Taylor's, No. 6), but it is not a very important point and may easily be explained as a quotation from a dramatic character in a fictitious work. That is how the other passages, which



Professor Taylor does not quote, are to be explained. Indeed, those apparent exceptions to our rule are in reality the strongest support for it. For they show that where Aristotle ascribed opinions to Socrates which can only be found in Plato's later dialogues, he is careful to describe him in a way which at least strongly suggests that he is quoting the Socrates who is a character in a dramatic work as opposed to the historical Socrates. The most obvious instance of this is in the well-known references to the communistic theories of the *Republic* in the *Politics*. Where Aristotle begins the exposition and criticism of these views in Book II, he states a position which has been maintained, 'as in the *Republic* of Plato: for there Socrates says,' and so on. This is the first introduction to the subject. Naturally enough, of course, after this while on the same subject he talks of Socrates as putting forward the views which he is criticising, without thinking it necessary to repeat the fact that it is Socrates in the *Republic*. But when after a break he once more refers to the views of Socrates in that dialogue, he repeats the reference to the *Republic*. In Book IV, chapter 4, he says, in discussing the necessary parts of the state, that 'this subject has been discussed . . . in the *Republic* of Plato. Socrates there says,' and so on. In Book V, chapter 12, in discussing the causes of changes in constitution, he says, 'In the *Republic* Socrates says about these changes,' and then proceeds to give his views. And again in Book VIII, chapter 7, when discussing the use of different musical modes, he ascribes the opinions quoted to *ὁ ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ Σωκράτης*, a particularly obvious qualification. Finally, there is a passage in the *De Generatione et Corruptione*, II, ix, 335 b. 10, where he quotes from the *Phaedo*. He says: 'But some have thought that the nature of the Ideas is by itself a sufficient cause of generation, ὥσπερ ὁ ἐν Φαίδωνι Σωκράτης.' All these passages go to show that when Aristotle is quoting the Socrates of the later dialogues, he is careful to use language which strongly suggests

that he is expressly distinguishing him from the historical Socrates. Altogether the evidence of Aristotle is thoroughly unfavourable to the view that Socrates was a Pythagorean or held a Theory of Ideas, or to the view that the Platonic dialogues are throughout to be taken as a record of the views of the historical Socrates.

For the sake of completeness, a word must now be said of the evidence of later writers. This evidence is not of very great value. On a point of philosophical opinion its value is practically reduced to a vanishing point. But there is one point on which, if Professor Taylor's views were correct, we should expect some evidence from the later authors. If Socrates had been within common knowledge a Pythagorean or an intimate associate of Pythagoreans, if he had derived his opinions from them, and if he had suffered martyrdom as a member of the sect, surely such facts would have survived in tradition. They would be just the kind of things to appeal to the imagination, and the tendency, if anything, would be for their importance to be exaggerated rather than minimised. And something of this tradition would have come down to the later authors whose works we possess. Yet so far as I can find there is no trace that they knew of any such tradition. Diogenes Laertius has heard nothing of it, though he knew of stories about Socrates' early teachers. Porphyry and Iamblichus in their lives of Pythagoras do not mention any connection between his views or his disciples and Socrates, and the latter author does not include Socrates in his list of famous Pythagoreans, though he casts his net pretty wide. It is, perhaps, less surprising that the fragments of the doxographers which we possess, say nothing about it: though they know something about Socrates' early associations, and mention more than once his connection with Archelaus. On the other hand, all these authorities agree in representing Plato as intimately connected with the Pythagoreans. Both Iamblichus and Porphyry speak of Plato's having borrowed freely from Pythagorean sources.

Diogenes has many stories about the connection. Plato is said to have visited the Pythagoreans in Italy some time after the death of Socrates. Pythagorean writers evidently thought it worth their while to make up absurd lies about Plato's buying Pythagorean books and serving up their views as his own. Diogenes also, we may mention in this connection, knows of malicious stories about the recognisable falsity of the picture of Socrates in some of the dialogues. Such evidence of course is worth nothing in itself, but it at least shows that there was a view in antiquity according to which the Socrates in the dialogues is not a historical figure. And in general we may say that, for what it is worth, the evidence of tradition is all on the side of the view that, while Plato was undoubtedly influenced by the Pythagoreans to a greater or lesser degree, their influence does not come to him through Socrates, for whose connection with that school there is no traditional evidence at all.

We come now to the important evidence of Plato himself. We have to ask whether, supposing that we put aside Xenophon and our other authorities altogether, we shall not find plenty of indications in the work of Plato himself which would induce us to view with suspicion any claim made that his portrait of Socrates was throughout to be regarded as historically true. A complete examination of all that we could learn from Plato would be an enormous task, and cannot be attempted here. It will be enough to suggest a few considerations from this point of view. And the first point for consideration is the remarkable evidence of the *Apology*.

The *Apology* is clearly on a very different level from the other dialogues. It contains no speculative doctrines and raises no philosophical problems. It cannot therefore have been written with any philosophical end in view. Unless it was written as a mere exercise in rhetoric, which is not likely, the interest of it must be entirely personal; it can only have been put forward in order to

tell us something about Socrates himself. We are not bound to believe that it is a verbally correct account of the defence Socrates actually delivered, nor even a paraphrase of the general arguments which he actually used. That is possible but it cannot be proved. But at the least we must maintain that the arguments given there are the kind of arguments that Socrates in his position might reasonably have put forward, and that will be quite sufficient for our purpose. This would be enough to justify us, for instance, in maintaining that he could not reasonably be represented as putting forward in his defence statements about himself which were quite untrue. It would be incredibly foolish as a matter of policy to do so. And besides that, if the rest of the dialogue has caught the spirit of Socrates' defence, it is clear that he showed no inclination to cover up inconvenient truths or to speak only what would 'go down' with the Athenians. Any statements then, which he is represented there as making about himself, may probably be taken as true; and at least they must be such as the Athenians might have believed.

The first point for our consideration in that dialogue is the light it throws on the exact meaning of the accusation against Socrates at his trial. What is the position according to Professor Taylor? Socrates is accused of importing strange deities, and the ground for the accusation is that he is a member of an Orphic or Pythagorean circle and that he takes part in their unauthorised religious observances. If this was the ground of the accusation,—a very well-chosen ground, according to Professor Taylor, for a prosecution before an Athenian audience—the prosecutors must have made the most of it. They must have mentioned it or even enlarged upon it in their speeches and made it quite clear what the accusation meant. And yet how does Socrates meet it? No attempt to explain it away, not even the slightest reference to it. If he could not have made any answer to it at all,

surely he would have left the point out altogether. But to profess to be in doubt what the accusation meant, when it had been made perfectly clear, to say that he supposed it was based on some caricature of his divine sign, when the accusers had expressly based it on something entirely different, that, surely, would be a line of defence too absurd even to be attempted. Professor Taylor suggests that it was all a joke. 'It is, in fact,' he writes, 'an admirable stroke of humour to suggest that the tremendous charge of "importing novel *δαιμόνια*" has nothing worse than this trifling business of the *σημείον* behind it.' It is, of course, a simple way of explaining away any awkward evidence by saying that it is meant humorously. No doubt it has not escaped Professor Taylor's notice that Socrates is not even original in this 'admirable stroke of humour.' The same excellent joke had already been made by Euthyphro. When Socrates tells him of the charge of importing novel deities, he replies, 'I understand, Socrates. It is because you say that you always have a divine sign.' The joke must have become quite a chestnut in Socratic, or—should we say?—Pythagorean circles, by this time. But perhaps the point of it will not be so apparent to anyone else as it is to Professor Taylor.

But there is more to come. Meletus is called up for cross-examination, and we have a chance of hearing from the accuser's own lips what he meant. Socrates asks him whether he means to accuse him of believing in no gods at all, or of teaching people to believe in strange gods. This, to begin with, is rather a strange question if Meletus has already explained that he means the latter. But there is something still more astonishing to follow. For though he means the latter and has pressed it home in his speech, he now replies that he means the former. He twice over reiterates that he believes Socrates to be a complete atheist, and goes on to connect Socrates with some of the speculations of Anaxagoras. Never a word about Orphic practices or secret Pythagorean brother-



hoods, though now was his opportunity of bringing it in. Professor Taylor's way of dealing with this passage is thoroughly characteristic. He writes, 'Of course, what the indictment really meant was the former alternative, but Meletus, being wholly unversed in dialectic, falls into a booby-trap of the simplest kind. He adopts the second alternative, no doubt, because it makes Socrates' wickedness more astounding, and thus the original charge of disloyalty to the State religion is adroitly converted into one of pure atheism.' That is to say, on being confronted with two alternatives expressed in the plainest possible terms, though one is a clear expression of his own views, he 'falls into the trap' and adopts the other. Is it likely? Is it possible? How many people in the world are so 'unversed in dialectic' that on being 'adroitly' asked whether a thing is black or white, they will reply that it is black, though they are firmly convinced all the time, and have already argued, that it is white?

I submit that anyone reading the dialogue without preconceptions will derive from it the same impression as from the account in Xenophon. That is, that the accusation of impiety was never formulated except in the most vague and general terms, that no explanation of it was vouchsafed nor the grounds on which it was based given, nor indeed ever really clear to the accusers themselves, the charge very likely being put in on the principle that in the present state of democratic sentiment any stick was good enough to beat Socrates with. At any rate, it seems impossible to believe, if the account in the *Apology* has any historical value, that the ground which Professor Taylor suggests was mentioned in the speech of the accuser. And here we may call Professor Taylor himself to witness. He says, 'At least, if Meletus said nothing in his speech about the *σημεῖον*, that cannot have been what he and Anytus meant by the accusation.' So we may say that if Meletus said nothing in his speech about participation in illicit rites or membership of an

unauthorised sect, that cannot have been what he and Anytus meant by the accusation.

Besides this, there are other points about his general mode of life which are equally interesting. Thus he represents himself as the Socrates whom we know from Xenophon, who, without any positive doctrine, any Theory of Ideas or Communistic opinions to teach, went about asking questions, criticising the cheap and easy knowledge of the leaders of the city and stimulating them to think for themselves. He declares also that his interest was entirely practical, to help the citizens to lead the good life, and not to teach them any scientific or philosophical doctrines. He denies in the most categorical form that the picture drawn by Aristophanes, upon which Professor Taylor relies so much, is a true one. Particularly he asserts that he has no interest in and no knowledge of the scientific and astronomical speculations which are ascribed to him there. Perhaps this is an exaggeration: Xenophon himself is anxious to assure us that Socrates was by no means ignorant of such subjects. But according to our canon it must have been one which the Athenians might be expected to believe. And if it were true that his interest in these subjects had belonged entirely to any earlier period of his life, which most of his judges would not remember, and that for many years now he had devoted himself to critical discussions on moral and political subjects, that would be sufficient to satisfy the canon. Finally he declares that he has no esoteric teaching kept for an inner circle of friends. 'If any man asserts,' he says, 'that he ever learnt or heard anything from me in private, which everyone else did not hear as well, be sure that he does not speak the truth.' Such an assertion is entirely incompatible with any theory of a Pythagorean circle, or secret society, where alone the subjects that really interested him were discussed, and where alone his own true views were revealed. Altogether there is plenty of evidence in the *Apology* to make

us doubt the historical truth of the picture of him which Professor Burnet and Professor Taylor extract from some of the other dialogues.

And now a few words as to the other dialogues. On the Taylorian hypothesis the views which are presented in them were in substance already known and published to the world before Plato began to write. Plato himself must have learnt them before 399, that is before he had published any of the more important of his dialogues; only a few, if any, can possibly have been published in the lifetime of Socrates. And, therefore, all the dialogues up to those in which Socrates disappears into the background must be simply expounding opinions which Plato had learnt before the age of twenty-eight. Of the general likelihood of that I will say nothing, for there is a further point to consider. The chronological order of the dialogues may be taken, with exceptions in single cases, to have been in the main established on stylistic and other grounds. Now, supposing that after an examination of the dialogues in this order there were found signs of a definite change or development in opinions or general point of view, the theory we are criticising would surely find itself in rather a curious position when called upon to explain these facts. The natural explanation that they represent a change in the author's own opinion is debarred to it. The opinions represent the *depositum fidei* of the teaching of Socrates, and once allow that there is any substantial modification of them anywhere, and there is no reason to stop short of a complete return to the traditional view. Presumably we should have to say that the developments represented the developments of Socrates' own mind, which were perfectly familiar to Plato, though he had only known him for the last eight or ten years of his life. 'With what singular dramatic power,' we can imagine Professor Burnet arguing, 'Plato pictures the developing of his master's mind, never even for a moment by a sign or word betraying in the earlier dialogues the developments which he knew had taken

place, but which were not to be described till the next work was published.' One modification, however, would have to be introduced. We should have to cease to interest ourselves in the date of the production of the dialogues. Rather should we have to look to the time in the life of Socrates to which they referred. Then the very latest developments of his theories would be found in the *Phaedo*, and the very earliest would have to be looked for in the *Parmenides*. There is a great deal of room for a most interesting reconstruction of our views about the logical development of the Theory of Ideas here.

But are there such developments to be noticed in the dialogues? One must, of course, admit that points, which on the face of it look like a change of view, may often be explained in some other way, if there are other strong reasons for doing so. It is not possible here to attempt to deal with the difficult and disputed question of changes in the Theory of Ideas itself. For a full treatment of the question and its bearing on the subject now under discussion, we must wait for Professor Taylor's own account of the Platonic philosophy which he has promised us. Let us rather now consider the general differences between the point of view represented in the very early dialogues, the *Lysis*, the *Charmides*, the *Euthyphro*, the *Ion*, and others, and that of the later ones. These are sufficiently startling if both are intended to represent the opinions and methods of the same historical person.

It is again largely a question of personal impression. But to me the whole difference of mental outlook between the earlier and later dialogues seems so great that it is impossible to explain it as consciously assumed for dramatic purposes. Here, however, I am not confined to personal impressions, but can bring a valuable witness to my aid. We must remember that Professor Taylor has not always been what he is now; he has known better days. And during that time, in fact, not more than a year

or two before the appearance of *Varia Socratica*, he published a little book on Plato which contained no trace of these later doctrines. And among other wise and excellent things in it he has a brief and succinct account of the marked differences between the earliest dialogues and those following them. The early dialogues are distinguished, we read, 'by the freshness of dramatic portraiture, the predominant pre-occupation with questions of ethics, and the absence of the great characteristic Platonic, psychological, epistemological and metaphysical conceptions, particularly of the famous Theory of Ideas.' The last dialogue of this group is the *Gorgias*. But here we already mark a change. For the *Gorgias*, as Professor Taylor points out, is the first dialogue which shows the influence of Orphic and Pythagorean ideas on Plato's mind, appearing, as it does, in the *σῶμα-σῆμα* doctrine, the idea that this life is a preparation for a life beyond the grave, where the soul will receive rewards and punishments for its action here. Professor Taylor at that time associated this doctrine with Plato's travels in Italy and Sicily, where he would have come into contact with Pythagorean and Orphic communities. But now he will have to ascribe it to the influence of Socrates, which was present to Plato from the time he began to write. We may venture to think that it will be difficult to explain why it took so long to appear, why there is no trace of it in the earlier dialogues. Professor Taylor also, at that time, detected a marked change in the ethical views presented in the earlier and later dialogues. The earlier dialogues, he said, were all under the influence of the Socratic view, which made all the virtues really one and practically identified them with knowledge. But in the later dialogues he gets away from this rather crude psychology, until we come to the threefold division of the soul and the four cardinal virtues in the *Republic*. This would mark a great advance in view, and show that we could not rely on the later dialogues, at any rate, for a historical account of Socrates' views. Add to these



points the difference between the representation of Socrates in the earliest and the later dialogues. In the early ones he is a real seeker after truth, conscious only of his own lack of certain knowledge, and ready to discuss each view with an open mind. The earlier dialogues generally end with a confession of agnosticism. For such an attitude the dialogue form is an appropriate expression. But in the later dialogues, beginning perhaps with the *Gorgias*, Socrates becomes more and more dogmatic, more and more evidently anxious to expound the truth which he believes he has got hold of. The dialogue form becomes less and less appropriate, and as early as the *Republic* there are long passages where it really adds nothing, the subordinate personages in the dialogue having nothing to do but to say *μάλιστα γε* or *πὼς γὰρ οὐ*; to Socrates' expression of his own views. It seems hard to believe that both sets of dialogues are historical representations of the same man. In fact, all these developments would be very hard to explain on such a hypothesis. Consider, for instance, the fact that the Theory of Ideas does not make its appearance until the *Phædo*. Supposing that the doctrine really was a distinguishing mark of Socrates' teaching and that Plato learnt it from him, is it not perfectly extraordinary that he makes no mention of it in any of the writings which were intended to expound that teaching until about twenty years after the master's death? The other points provide equal difficulties. If, on the other hand, we believe that the changes in the dialogues represent changes in Plato's own opinions and point of view and that none of them or only the earliest ones represent the historical Socrates, then the whole thing becomes simple and intelligible.

Now before we conclude, there are three questions which have been asked by the supporters of the view under discussion, to which I think some sort of answer ought to be attempted. These are (1) Why did Plato put his views into the mouth of Socrates, if they did not represent Socrates' own views? (2) Why does he

throughout the dialogues represent the Theory of Ideas as something perfectly familiar to everyone, if he had really invented it himself? (3) If Socrates was no more than Xenophon represents him, how did he come to have such a powerful attraction for men like the Pythagoreans, Simmias and Cebes, and the Eleatic Euclides, whose chief interest lay in profound metaphysical speculations? For these questions I will suggest brief answers, premising that I do not believe, that even if no satisfactory answer to them could be found, the considerations put forward in them could outweigh the evidence on the other side which we have been considering.

(1) Why did Plato choose Socrates as the mouthpiece of his views? The answer to this is surely not very difficult. In the first place, it is very probable (though not necessary to our theory) that the early dialogues of Plato really are Socratic. That is to say without necessarily being records of historical fact, they may well confine themselves to putting forward the kind of views that Socrates actually did hold, and supporting them by the kind of arguments he actually did use. He was working entirely on Socratic lines and very naturally put his views into the mouth of Socrates, because they were substantially those that he had derived from Socrates. When he developed these views into new and original theories of his own there is nothing unlikely in supposing that he kept to the person of Socrates because his new views did develop out of his old, and he may not have been clearly conscious himself at what point exactly he went beyond the teachings of his master. For,—and this is the important point whether the early dialogues were truly Socratic or not—Plato's own views may be perfectly naturally represented as developments along the road on which Socrates had set him, developments which went very far beyond his starting-point, it is true, but still developments in the same direction. Thus the Theory of Ideas may perfectly naturally have seemed to Plato to be the logical consequence, only

waiting to be drawn, from the insistence on the importance of universal definitions which is characteristic of Socrates. At any rate, the line of speculation which eventually led Plato to that theory must have been started by an impulse such as this. Similarly many of the startling political views in the *Republic* may well have seemed to Plato to be only the natural consequences which followed from the kind of criticisms of democracy that are attributed to Socrates by Xenophon. There is nothing unnatural in thus using Socrates as the dramatic mouthpiece of conclusions which seemed to be implicit in his own teachings, though he himself never actually drew them.

(2) There is certainly at first sight something a little strange in the fact that Plato nowhere in his dialogues gives us a complete and detailed statement of the Theory of Ideas nor attempts any systematic proof of it. It comes in as something with which the other characters in the dialogues are already familiar and which may be used as the basis of further argument. But this does not really seem enough to prove or even to make probable the view that the theory was derived from Socrates. It is equally well explained on several other suppositions. Perhaps the most natural explanation is to be found in the fact to which Professor Burnet himself draws attention, that is the fact that a great part of Plato's teaching was not given in the dialogues at all, but orally in the form of lectures at the Academy. We can, of course, say nothing with certainty about these, but it is at least perfectly possible that he reserved systematic exposition and defence of these theories for his lectures and confined the dialogues to treating of their application to special questions, and to dealing with particular points in the theory itself. If this was his method, it would have been necessary for dramatic purposes to represent the theory as familiar to the personages in the dialogues.

This comes out very clearly in the *Phaedo*, the dialogue to which Professor Burnet has given special attention.

There are several awkward points in this dialogue for those who would regard it as a historical account, and Professor Burnet's ingenious attempts to explain them away will surely strike most people as a little forced (see e.g. his edition of the *Phaedo*, Intro., p. lv, end of § xiii, and note on 87 b. 7). On our view, however, everything follows naturally. We must imagine that Plato wished to write a dialogue on the immortality of the soul—a discussion for which the last scene of Socrates' life would prove a natural and effective background—and that he naturally wished to show how his special logical and metaphysical views bore on this problem. To get the discussion started, it is necessary to represent the other speakers as not familiar with this belief, though they were Pythagoreans, and though they were constant associates of Socrates, who is represented in the *Republic* as having held and advocated this view some time before. On the other hand, it would not be possible within the limits of a dialogue to go into all the doctrines on which the proof of immortality depended. So the Theory of Ideas, and the doctrine of Reminiscence, have to be represented as familiar to and accepted by Cebes and Simmias, so that their bearing on the problem under discussion may be shown. It is worth noting that Cebes' exposition of the doctrine of Reminiscence is an obvious reference to the *Meno*, a dialogue in which he does not appear. Again, as Plato wishes to discuss two rival views of the relation of the soul and the body, he would naturally put them into the mouths of the two chief interlocutors of Socrates: and so we get the Pythagorean Cebes maintaining a view which, as Professor Burnet points out, is essentially Heraclitean. All these things surely find their most natural explanation in this way.

(3) Now we come to the third point, which is the one which seems to have most weight with the advocates of the theory we are examining. It was Schleiermacher who first tried to show that, in Professor Burnet's words, 'Socrates must have been more than Xenophon tells us,

if he was to exercise the attraction he did upon the ablest and most speculative men of his time.' Professor Burnet revives the argument and adds that we must ask most specially 'What must Socrates have been to win the enthusiastic devotion of the Pythagoreans of Thebes and Phlius and of the Eleatics of Megara?' And the answer is that he must have been himself an Orphic and Pythagorean, or at least strongly touched with their particular views, that he must have been interested in the science of his age, that he must have been the author of daring and profound metaphysical speculations, and in particular that he must have adopted the belief in personal immortality and in the Theory of Ideas.

Now, *pace* Professor Burnet, we know very little indeed about men like Cebes and Simmias. We do not really even know for certain that they were complete Pythagoreans or members of any society; to know that they were pupils of Philolaus, a Pythagorean teacher, does not tell us that. We really know nothing about their tastes and characters and we cannot make any inferences as to what sort of person a man with whom they loved to associate must have been. We may note in passing that Professor Burnet himself asserts that the Pythagoreans contemporary with Plato had dropped their former metaphysical interests and devoted themselves to science and politics. If this is so, would not Socrates' great interest in political and ethical questions have been sufficient to attract members of that sect to him? That is the explanation Xenophon gives of the presence of Simmias and Cebes in the Socratic circle.

However, leaving the point and turning to the more general question, it is argued that if Socrates were as Xenophon represents him, he would not have attracted to him men of a metaphysical and speculative turn of mind. This argument seems to depend on the assumption, fortunately entirely untrue, that metaphysicians can only love and admire other metaphysicians, that sympathy, insight, practical wisdom, moral elevation, intellectual

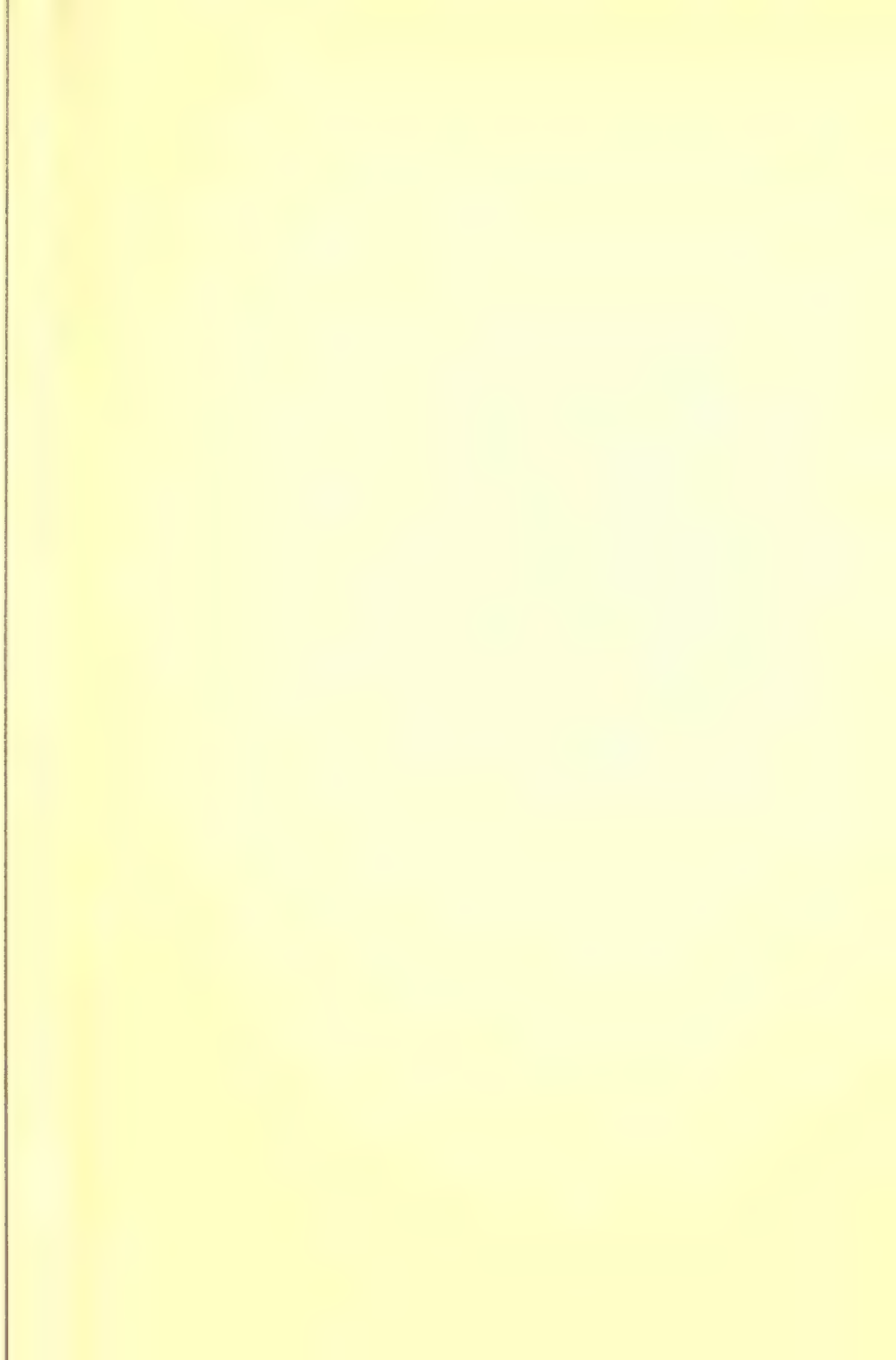


honesty, sense of humour, and keen powers of criticism on any subject have no attraction for them unless combined with original metaphysical speculations. But we must remember that we ought not to claim too much for Xenophon's account. All that our argument requires is that his account should not have seriously misrepresented or omitted any important historical fact. We are not bound to argue that he possesses any power of dramatic portraiture, of making a character and a personality live before us, so that we can really realise the sort of man he is. He does his best, but it is a poor best. We should rather look at the early Socratic dialogues of Plato. They differ from Xenophon in no important historical fact nor do they put anything tangible in which he omits. But the one account is a living picture, the other dry bones. Let us turn then to these dialogues and ask whether the Socrates shown in them does not display qualities of mind and character which might attract any man to his side.

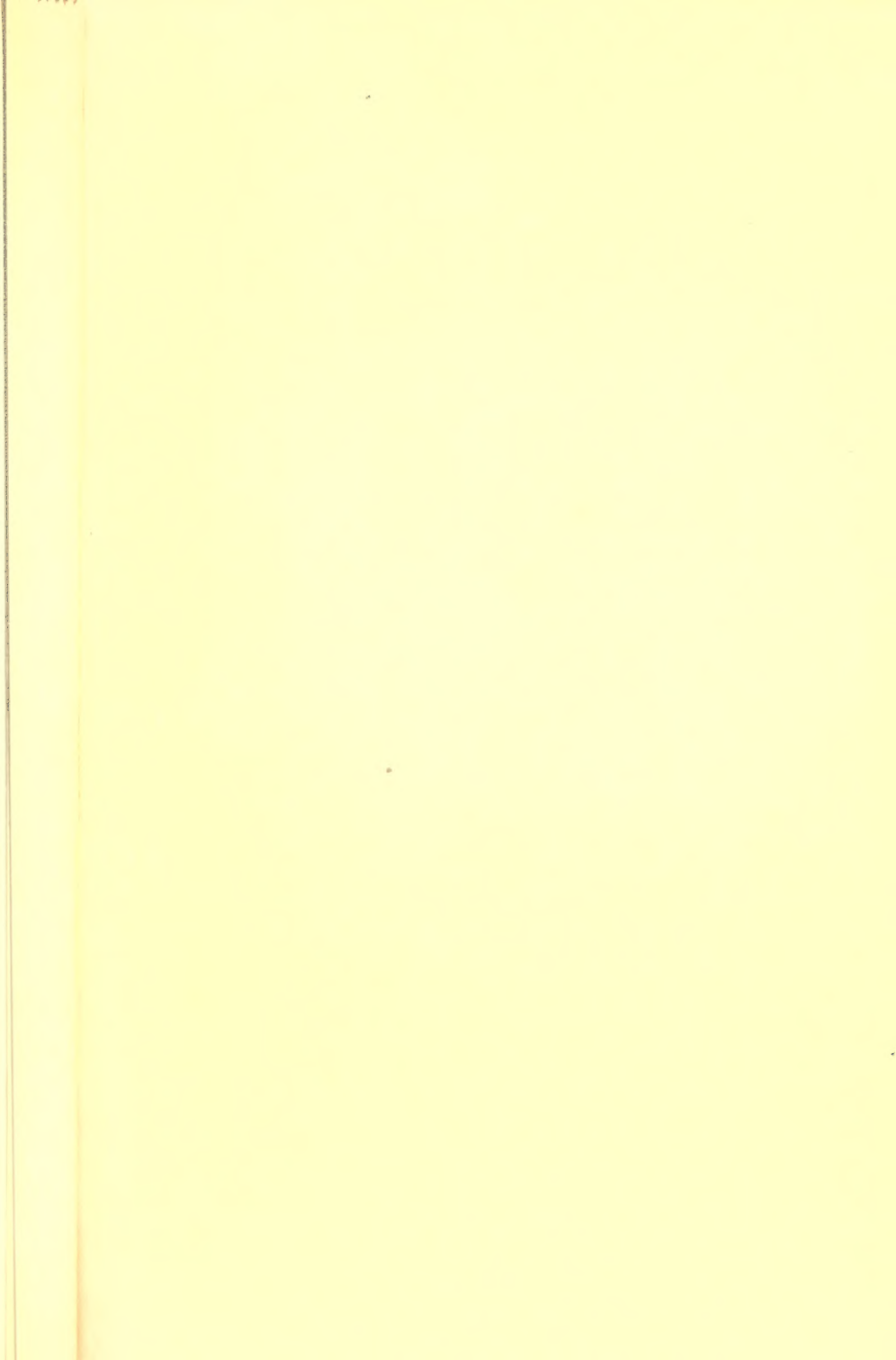
Perhaps it is permissible to conclude with a modern parallel? To the Oxford man of the younger generation there is always something a little difficult to understand in the extraordinary influence and attraction that Benjamin Jowett exercised on the men of his time. But of the extent and depth of this influence there can be no question. And fortunately we have one or two written accounts, as well as the opportunity of conversation with those few of our seniors who possess real powers of description, which enable us to some extent to feel and understand what that attraction must have been. Among the men who fell under his influence were not a few distinguished philosophers; but he was certainly not a philosopher in the technical sense of the word, and it was not as such that he made his appeal. So that we can imagine some Taylor or Burnet of a future generation reading, say Campbell and Abbott's *Life of Jowett*, and saying, 'Jowett must have been more than this to have exercised the attraction that he did on men like Green and Caird.' And then

they would probably go on to argue that it was really Jowett who introduced the Hegelian philosophy into England, and that Caird and Green learnt it from him and were only expounding his views in all their books. The parallel must, of course, not be pressed too far, but it serves to show the lengths to which such arguments might lead.

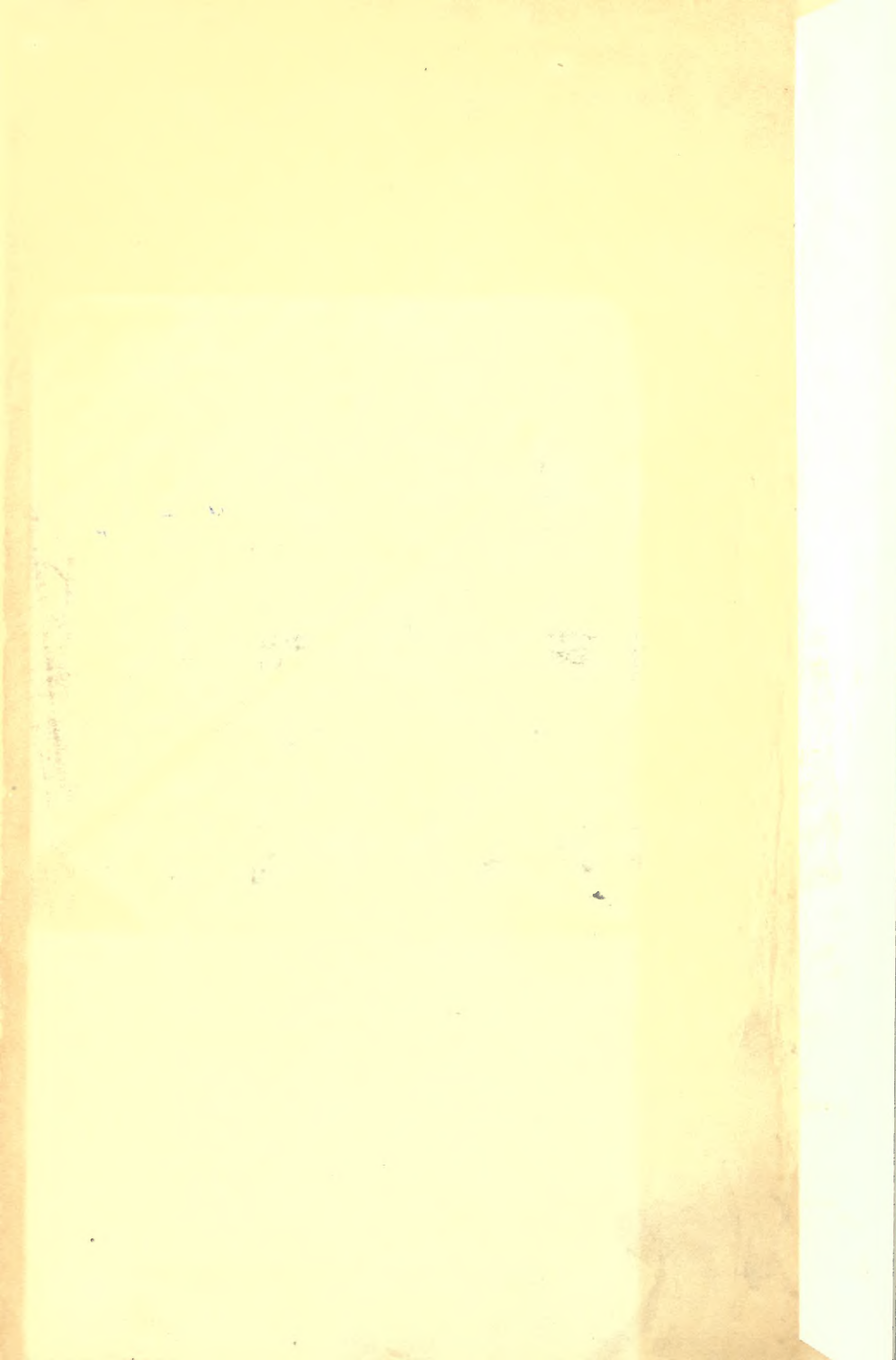
To sum up, then, we have found strong evidence from Xenophon, from Aristotle and from Plato himself, against all the propositions in which Professor Taylor's position was summed up at the beginning of this essay. Our conclusions have only been negative. No attempt has been made, except incidentally, to establish any positive views as to the nature of Socrates' influence and teaching. That is a piece of work which is still waiting to be done.











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